

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 KIGALI 00248 01 OF 02 181712Z
ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EUR-08 PM-03 DODE-00 NSC-05
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FM AMEMBASSY KIGALI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5789
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KIGALI 248

LIMDIS

KINSHASA ALSO FOR DATT

E.O. 11652: GS
TAGS: EAID, MILI, RW, US
SUBJECT: RWANDA'S "NON-LETHAL" MILITARY AID REQUEST: POSTMORTEM

REF: (A) 77 STATE 301327; (B) KIGALI 184

SUMMARY: WHEN RWANDAN ARMY OFFICERS MOST INTIMATELY
INVOLVED IN AID REQUEST AND OUR REFUSAL STILL CAN'T
GRASP LOGIC OF OUR ARMS TRANSFER POLICY, MAYBE WE'D
BETTER FIND ALTERNATIVE MEANS TO SHOW WE'RE NOT OBLIVIOUS
TO RWANDA'S WEAKNESS NOR TO EXPANDING SOVIET ROLE IN
AFRICA. OTHERWISE, HIS LESS WELL-MEANING MOR RETROGRADE
MILITARY RIVALS MAY JUST TIP BALANCE AGAINST WESTERN TIES,
OBLIGE GOR TO CURRY FAVOR WITH SELF-SAME SOVIETS, AND
RETARD PROGRESS ON HUMAN RIGHTS, BROAD-BASED DEVELOPMENT,
AND OTHER US INTERESTS. END SUMMARY.

1. I PAID A CASUAL VISIT LAST WEEK TO COMDT. LEONIDAS
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PAGE 02 KIGALI 00248 01 OF 02 181712Z

RUSATIRA, CHEF DE CABINET AT MINDEF, A CONFIDANT OF
PRES HABYARIMANA, AND RWANDAN MOST INVOLVED IN GOR'S
UNSUCCESSFUL APPEAL FOR US MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOR
"NATION-BUILDING." IT WAS OUR FIRST PRIVATE CONVERSA-
TION SINCE WE FORMALLY NOTIFIED GOR THAT REQUESTED AID
WOULD NOT RPT NOT BE FORTHCOMING (REF A).

2. RUSATIRA, MIND YOU, IS A VERY BRIGHT GUY WHO AT LEAST APPEARS TO UNDERSTAND EXPLANATIONS FOR THE WAY AMERICANS DO (OR DON'T DO) THINGS. IT WAS TO RUSATIRA THAT I MADE CASE AGAINST REQUESTING US MILITARY AID IN FIRST PLACE, LONG BEFORE WE RECEIVED THAT REQUEST, AND IT WAS O HIM -- AND THROUGH HIM TO PRESIDENT -- THAT I DELIVERED MY BEST PREPARED ARGUMENTS IN DEFENSE OF CARTER ARMS TRANSFER POLICY. I TRULY THOUGHT THAT HE, OF ALL PEOPLE, UNDERSTOOD.

3. BUT TO JUDGE FROM HIS REMARKS LAST WEEK, ONE WOULD HAVE THOUGHT WE'D BEEN TRANSPORTED BACK A YEAR IN TIME: "IS IT THAT THE US DOESN'T LIKE RWANDA?" HE BEGAN; "DOES IT DISTRUST OUR FRIENDSHIP OR BELIEVE WE'RE PRO-COMMUNIST? ARE THERE PEOPLE IN WASHINGTON WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN MORE SYMPATHETIC TO OUR NEEDS? DGES WASHINGTON NOT REALIZE HOW WEAK RWANDA'S ARMY IS COMPARED TO ITS NEIGHBORS? DOES IT NOT RECOGNIZE THE THREAT POSED BY USSR AND HOW ACTIVELY LATTER IS ARMING ITS FRIENDS?"

4. HE WENT ON IN THIS VEIN: "WE UNDERSTAND PRESIDENT CARTER'S PROBLEM WITH EXPORTING LETHAL WEAPONS TO COUNTRIES LIKE RWANDA, BUT HOW COULD HE HAVE REFUSED OUR REQUEST FOR TRUCKS, AMBULANCES, RADIOS, MEDICINES, AND OTHER MATERIALS TO ENABLE ARMY TO CONTRIBUTE TO RWANDAN DEVELOPMENT?" AGAIN I WENT THROUGH THE CONDITIONS ON PRESIDENTIAL DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY, AS WELL AS CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 KIGALI 00248 01 OF 02 181712Z

THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST CHANNELING DEVELOPMENT AID THROUGH MILITARY. "BUT WHAT IF RWANDA IS ACTUALLY INVADED? THEN WHAT WILL US DO?" (I DODGED.) " AND WHAT ABOUT BURUNDI AND ITS NEW COZINESS WITH WASHINGTON -- THEY'LL BE AFTER MILITARY AID, AND THEY'LL PROBABLY GET IT." (THIS I BELIEVE HE MEANIT IN JEST, BUT IT BETRAYED THE DEPTHS OF HIS WORRIES.)

5. IMPERVIOUS TO MY REJOINDERS, RUSATIRA TREATED ME TO VIRTUALLY SAME GEOPOLITICAL LECTURE THAT PRESIDENT GAVE ME A YEAR AGO: RWANDA IS ANXIOUS OVER GROWING SOVIET INFLUENCE ACROSS CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN AFRICA; IT WAS SHAKEN BY OUR ABANDONING FRIENDS IN ANGOLA AND SHOCKED BY OUR FAILURE TO HELP MOBUTU IN SHABA; IT FACES GROWING USSR-SUPPORTED MILITARY STRENGTH ON ALL SIDES AND CLINGS TO ZAIRE RELATIONSHIP FOR SECURITY AND AS A CLAIM ON ZAIRE'S WESTERN SUPPORTERS IN EVEN OF EMERGENCY. RWANDA THINKS US SERIOUSLY UNDERESTIMATES SOVIET THREAT, NOW DRAMATICALLY DEMONSTRATED IN HORN OF AFRICA; AND US FAILURE TO RECOGNIZE AND RESPOND TO RWANDA'S NEEDS SEEMS TO CONFIRM ITS FEARS. WHERE IS PRESIDENT TO TURN FOR HELP IF WEST CONTINUES TO IGNORE HIS APPEALS?

6. COMMENT: I YIELD TO NO ONE IN MY SUPPORT FOR EFFORTS TO REDUCE US ROLE IN ARMS TRANSFERS, AND I HAVE OPPOSED SUPPLYING ARMS PER SE TO RWANDAN FROM THE BEGINNING. BUT AS WE PROCEED TO IMPLEMENT ENLIGHTENED NEW ARMS POLICY, RUSATIRA'S LAMENT SHOULD REMIND US WE MUST COUNT THE COST IN POLITICAL TERMS:

-- OUR SERIOUSNESS OF PURPOSE IS CALLED INTO QUESTION. HIGH-MINDED ARGUMENTS FOR ARMS RESTRAINT CARRY LITTLE WEIGHT AMONG MILITARY MEN GENUINELY CONCERNED OVER THEIR COUNTRY'S SECURITY, WORRIED OVER SOVIET/CUBAN INROADS IN AFRICA, AND PARTICULARLY ANXIOUS AT CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE HORN (WHERE OUR ARMS POLICY STRIKES THEM AS INEF-
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 KIGALI 00248 01 OF 02 181712Z

FECTIVE). STILL THINKING IN COLD WAR TERMS, AND WITH NO VISIBLE PROGRESS TOWARD GLOBAL ARMS CONTROL, THEY WONDER AT OUR COMMITMENT TO WESTERN LEADERSHIP.

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PAGE 01 KIGALI 00248 02 OF 02 181708Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KIGALI 248

LIMDIS

--DOMESTIC OPPONENTS' HANDS ARE STRENGTHENED. MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT IN COUNTRY LIKE RWANDA IS NOT MONLITHIC BUT IN FACT IS FULL OF ITS OWN POLICITS AND INTRIGUES (REFTEL B). HABYARIMANA IS NO "DICTATOR" BUT

IS OBLIGED TO PLAY POLITICS WITH HIS COLONELS, SOME OF WHOM ARE CERTIFIED RETROGRADES KNOWN TO BE UNHAPPY WITH HIS PRESENT EMPHASIS ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, REGIONAL COOPERATION, AND ETHNIC RECONCILIATION (THEY ALLEGE HE IS MERELY BUILDING A "PERSONALITY CULT"). HABYARIMANA'S SETBACKS ARE THEIR GAIN.

--SUPPLIER ROLE MAY BE FILLED BY OTHERS. RWANDANS, ESPECIALLY MILITARY, TEND TO JUDGE FRIENDSHIP IN VERY CONCRETE TERMS. IF TRADITIONAL WESTERN "FRIENDS" FAIL TO PRODUCE THE GOODS THEY BELIEVE THEY NEED, FEW QUIBBLE OVER IDEOLOGY IN EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE TIES AND SUPPLIES (SEE FOOTNOTE PARA 10). PERCEPTIONS OF EFFECTIVE POWER COUNT FOR MUCH MORE.

-- DEVELOPMENT ITSELF MAY BE HAMPERED. PRESIDENT'S RIVALS ALREADY RESENT HIS PREOCCUPATION WITH DEVELOPMENT, AND THEY ARE NOT PACIFIED BY BEING TOLD THAT WE WANT TO

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PAGE 02 KIGALI 00248 02 OF 02 181708Z

PUT OUR MONEY INSTEAD INTO DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS (WHICH IN ANY CASE ARE AGONIZINGLY SLOW TO MATERIALIZE). THESE OFFICERS ARE LIKELY TO INCREASE THEIR DEMANDS THAT GOR CHANNEL MORE OF ITS OWN SCARCE FUNDS INTO MILITARY PROCUREMENT ON CASH-AND-CARRY BASIS.

7. CHIEF DANGER, IN MY VIEW, IS THAT HAVING FORESWORN ARMS TRANSFERS WE DENY OURSELVES AN IMPORTANT MEANS OF ENCOURAGING FORWARD MOTION IN A HOST OF NON-MILITARY AREAS, PRECISELY BECAUSE MILITARY OFFICERS EXERCISE CRITICAL INFLUENCE OVER THOSE AREAS. WHEN WE REFUSE AID REQUESTED BY FRIENDLY MILITARY ELEMENTS, WE INEVITABLY WEAKEN THEIR POSITION VIS-A-VIS THE RETROGRADE ELEMENTS: THEY ARE OBLIGED NOT ONLY TO HARKEN TO SIREN SONGS OF ALTERNATIVE SUPPLIERS (SOVIETS, LIBYANS, ETC.) BUT ALSO TO HEDGE AGAINST THEIR RIVALS' CRITICISMS THAT TOO MUCH TIME, MONEY, AND ATTENTION ARE SPENT ON CIVILIAN DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL PROGRAMS OF INTEREST TO US. THIS IS PRECISELY THE AWKWARD POSITION IN WHICH PRES. HABYARIMANA FINDS HIMSELF RIGHT NOW.

8. IF REAL PURPOSE OF OUR POLICY IS TO DISCOURAGE ARMS RACE -- AND NOT MERELY TO DISPARAGE MILITARY AS AN INSTITUTION -- THEN I BELIEVE MORE EFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVE MEANS MUST BE FOUND TO RETAIN INFLUENCE AMONG MILITARY AND ENCOURAGE ITS LEADERS TO PLAY RESPONSIBLE ROLES IN DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY:

A. ONE WAY, OF COURSE, IS TO SPEED UP DEVELOPMENT AID IN GENERAL, WHICH AT LEAST ENCOURAGES THOSE MILITARY

OFFICERS WHOSE HEARTS ARE ALREADY IN RIGHT PLACE. IN
THIS CONNECTION, AID RESTRICTIONS ON CHANNELING
DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE VIA MILITARY SHOULD BE RELAXED
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PAGE 03 KIGALI 00248 02 OF 02 181708Z

(E.G., TO ALLOW HELP TO ARMY CLINICS WHICH MAINLY SERVE
CIVILIAN COMMUNITY NEEDS).

B. ANOTHER IS TO CURRY BILATERAL PROFESSIONAL
MILITARY TIES BY NON-FMS MEANS: ATTACHE VISITS (WHICH
WE ARE CONTINUING FOR THIS PURPOSE); TRAINING GRANTS;
VIP TRIPS; SPORTS EXCHANGES; EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS; AND
SERIOUS CONSULTATION ON REGIONAL SECURITY MATTERS.
CAREFULLY PURSUED, THERE IS NO REASON TO ASSUME AUTO-
MATICALLY, AS WE DO NOW, THAT THESE TIES WILL INEVITABLY
STIMULATE REQUESTS FOR MILITARY HARDWARE WHICH WE CANNOT
SATISFY.

C. A THIRD -- AND I STILL SUPPORT THIS -- IS TO
RECOGNIZE THAT MILITARY INFLUENCE EVENTS FAR OUTSIDE
THEIR OWN SPHERE; THAT THEY ARE CAPABLE OF PLAYING
CONSTRUCTIVE DEVELOPMENTAL AND SOCIAL ROLES; AND THAT WE
CAN ENCOURAGE THEM IN THIS DIRECTION BY SUPPLYING NON-
COMBAT EQUIPMENT TO DO THE JOB.

9. RECOGNIZE THAT LAST ALTERNATIVE NOW HAMSTRUNG BY FMS
LEGISLATION WHICH DRAWS NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN WAR-MAKING
AND NATION-BUILDING. BUT IF WE WISH TO PRESERVE SOME
INFLUENCE ON POLITICAL DYNAMICS IN QUASI-MILITARY REGIME
LIKE RWANDA'S, WE SHOULD CONTINUE TRYING TO MAKE THIS
VERY DISTINCTION. I TRULY BELIEVED THAT NON-LETHAL AID
TO RWANDA'S ARMY WOULD HELP TO KEEP TRENDS HERE GOING
IN RIGHT DIRECTION -- ON HUMAN RIGHTS, ETHNIC RECON-
CILIATION, COOPERATION WITH NEIGHBORS, FAMILY PLANNING,
AND IMPROVEMENT GENERALLY IN PEOPLE'S LIVING STANDARDS.
TOO BAD IT DIDN'T FLY, AS THOSE WHO OPPOSE THOSE TRENDS
ARE CERTAIN TO BENEFIT.

10. FOOTNOTE: BELGIAN AMBASSADOR, WHOSE GOVT HAS SIMILARLY REFUSED
TO PROVIDE NEW MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO RWANDA, TELLS ME
HAYBARIMANA COMPLAINED TO HIM DIRECTLY THAT HIS ARMY OFFICERS HAD HIM
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PAGE 04 KIGALI 00248 02 OF 02 181708Z

"WITH HIS BACK TO THE WALL" AS A RESULT.
CRIGLER

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